

# NEW REPTILE RECORDS FOR THE NORTHERN TERRITORY.

By R. Wells

One snake, *Typhlina ligata* and two lizards, *Menetia maini* and *Notoscincus kinghorni* are reported for the first time as elements of the Northern Territory herpetofauna. Additional data is provided for *Notoscincus ornatus*, and *Notoscincus wotjulum*, species well-known from other states but rarely collected in the Northern Territory.

## ROBUST BLIND SNAKE (*Typhlina ligata*).

Several specimens of this snake, not previously known from the Northern Territory, were recently discovered in the vicinity of Darwin. Most were found beneath objects flush with the ground, such as concrete slabs, rocks and logs, in areas of low elevation (approximately 20 metres above sea-level); the habitat was open Eucalyptus woodland with spear grass (*Sorghum* sp.) with a substrate of firm slightly moist lateritic soil (with iron stone pebbles 5 - 10 mm. in diameter near the surface). One specimen (R4687) was discovered active on the surface at 2245 hrs on the 18th June, 1977. Specimens have been located sympatrically with *T. unguirostris*, *T. diversa* and *T. bramina*, but it appears to share greater habitat compatibility with *T. unguirostris*; both *T. diversa* and *T. bramina* seem to favour the damper, finer soil areas - particularly the latter species.

*T. ligata* shares the mid-body scale-count of 24 with only one other Australian Blind Snake, *T. unguirostris*, from which it can be distinguished by its hand shape. *T. ligata* the head in evenly rounded when viewed from both the top and side, whereas in *T. unguirostris*, the snout is sharply angular in profile - hence its common name of Hook-nosed Blind Snake. Both species are similar in colouration, but *T. ligata* usually has the top of the head "streaked" with varying shades of brown on a lighter background; this is absent in *T. unguirostris*.

It was once regarded as a strictly East Australian species until Storr (1965) reported a specimen of *T. ligata* from the Ord River in Western Australia.

Northern Territory Museum, Darwin.  
22 km. N.E. Noonamah R2925; 30 km. S. Darwin,

R2946; Millner (suburb of Darwin) R3120, Berry Springs Reserve, R3279, R4012, 25 km. S. Berri-mah, R3301; 27 km S. Darwin, R3477; 11 km S. Berrimah, R4687.

## MAIN'S SKINK (*Menetia maini*)

Three specimens from two separate localities in the Northern Territory, represent considerable range extensions for this otherwise Western Australian lizard. During February, 1977 two adults were secured near Pine Creek, active in leaf-litter at the base of small shrubs in an undulating area; the soil was firm lateritic, with small ironstone pebbles on the surface. The third specimen, also an adult, was taken during the same period at Ban Ban springs Station. It was discovered beneath leaf-litter at the base of a tree on a rocky hillslope. The habitat here is much the same as at Pine Creek.

Specimens of *M. maini* were previously known only from the Derby area and Prince Regent River, in the Kimberley Division of Western Australia (Storr 1976.) Northern Territory Museum, Darwin.  
5.5 km N. Pine Creek, R31001; Ban Ban Springs, R3181.

## KINGHORN'S SKINK (*Notoscincus kinghorni*)

Until quite recently, this lizard was known from only a few individuals, taken along the Darling River (between Bourke and Wilcannia) New South Wales (Copeland, 1947; Worrell, 1963; Cogger, 1975) and a specimen from Dunkerry Station, via Thallon, S.W. Queensland (Hosmer, 1956). It is now known that it occurs over a wide area in New South Wales and Queensland, mainly occupying the black soil plains.

A specimen collected on Brunette Downs station N.T. (Barkley Tableland) apparently represents the first record of its occurrence outside the Eastern States. It was discovered in May 1977, trapped in a workshop pit at the Station's Homestead by Mr H. Van Dyke who kindly donated the specimen to the Northern Territory Museum in Darwin.

*N. kinghorni* can be immediately distinguish-

ed from other *Notoscincus* by its distinctive pattern of narrow whitish longitudinal stripes (with brownish intervals) on the body and a bright red tail. Its low mid-body scale-count of 22 (against 26-28 in *N.ornatus* and 30-32 in *N.wotjulum*) may also be useful.

Northern Territory Museum, Darwin.  
Brunette Downs Homestead N.T., R.3673.

#### BROOM'S SKINK (*Notoscincus ornatus*)

Previous records for this skink's occurrence in the Northern Territory were confined to a single mention of a specimen from Hurst Creek, 10 km S. Wauchope (Storr 1974 a). On the 2nd September, 1975, Mr. P.R. Rankin secured a specimen 68 km S.W. Alice Springs; it was discovered beneath a thin, partly embedded stick on a small sand dune, and when disturbed, attempted to escape down a near vertical burrow. A further specimen was collected by Mr. B. Jukes soon afterwards (27th February, 1976), at Maryvale on the western boundary of the Simpson Desert. He reported locating it and several others beneath grass clumps on sand dunes.

Australian Museum, Sydney  
68 km. S.W. Alice Springs R52054.  
Northern Territory Museum, Darwin.  
Maryvale, R2351.

#### WOTJULUM SKINK (*Notoscincus wotjulum*)

Northern Territory records for this lizard were unknown until Storr (1974 a) made mention of a specimen that had been secured 8 km. S.E. Oenpelli. During 1977 numerous specimens were found throughout the Katherine - Pine Creek - Adelaide River region. Although they can be located in the limestone karst areas such as near Katherine, they are certainly more abundant in the granite hills further north. This is another leaf-litter species, preferring the verges of non-perennial streams in areas of open Eucalyptus forest. They forage late in the afternoon, usually in the litter but also around broken rock, and when rustling through dry leaves, their immediate appearance leads one to believe that they are merely one of countless *Carlia* also present. Upon closer inspection however, *N.wotjulum* bears a striking resemblance to some elements of the *Morethia* in its body form and behaviour; they are extremely alert and appear to have excellent eyesight for such a small surface-dwelling lizard.

Northern Territory Museum, Darwin.  
Katherine area, R2863; 17.5 km. E. Daly River

P.O., R4123-9; 8 km. N. Pine Creek, R3108; 5.7 km. N. Pine Creek, R3389-90; 20 km. N.W. Pine Creek, R4582-3.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

The author wishes to thank Dr. Colin Jack-Hinton and Graeme Gow, of the Northern Territory Museum in Darwin for the opportunity to examine specimens as well as for general encouragement. The generous assistance of Norm and Chris Boyd, Chris Cox, Mike Fisher, Brian and Kay Jukes, Keith Martin, Dean Metcalfe and Peter Rankin is greatly appreciated. This work was carried out under authority from the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission, Darwin and their assistance and advice is also appreciated. Miss Jenny Cochrane kindly turned an otherwise undecipherable manuscript into excellent typescript.